

**VERTIGO**

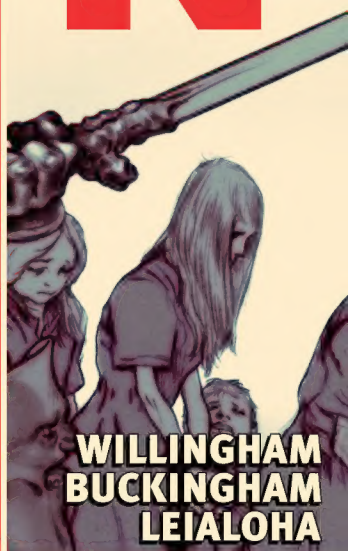
**PART 1: RETURN TO THE HOMELANDS**

**F  
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**4TH**

**J  
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N**



**WILLINGHAM  
BUCKINGHAM  
LEIALOHA**

**HORDE EMPIRE'S ARMY**

**ARE YOU AN ABLE-BODIED  
YOUNG SMALL-TRIBE GOBLIN,  
LOOKING TO GET AWAY  
FROM YOUR HUMDRUM LIFE**

no. **36** June 05  
suggested for mature readers  
[vertigo.com](http://vertigo.com)

**SEE YOUR  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
RECRUITER  
TODAY!**

JJ04





...SO I LEAVE  
THE BARRACKS TO GO  
DOWN INTO THE HUMAN  
VILLAGE TO SPEND THE  
NIGHT WITH MY **NEW**  
MISTRESS.

I'M  
SURPRISED,  
OGREN.

YOU KEEP  
A HUMAN DOXY?  
HOW CAN YOU  
STAND **TOUCH-**  
**ING** HER?

THEY'RE SO  
PINK AND SOFT. HARDLY  
A DISTINGUISHING MOLE,  
CANKER OR BLEMISH  
AMONG THEM.

TAKE MY  
WORD FOR IT,  
THROK.

THEY'LL **GET**  
TO LOOK GOOD TO  
YOU, ONCE YOU'VE  
BEEN AWAY FROM YOUR  
WIFE AS LONG AS I'VE  
BEEN AWAY FROM  
MINE.



DID YOU KNOW  
THE TWELFTH GOBLIN  
HORDE ALLOWS WIVES AND  
CAMP FOLLOWERS TO  
**ACCOMPANY** THEIR MEN  
ON DEPLOYMENT?

WE  
SHOULD  
REQUEST  
**TRANSFER**  
TO THE  
TWELFTH.

# DEATH & TAXES

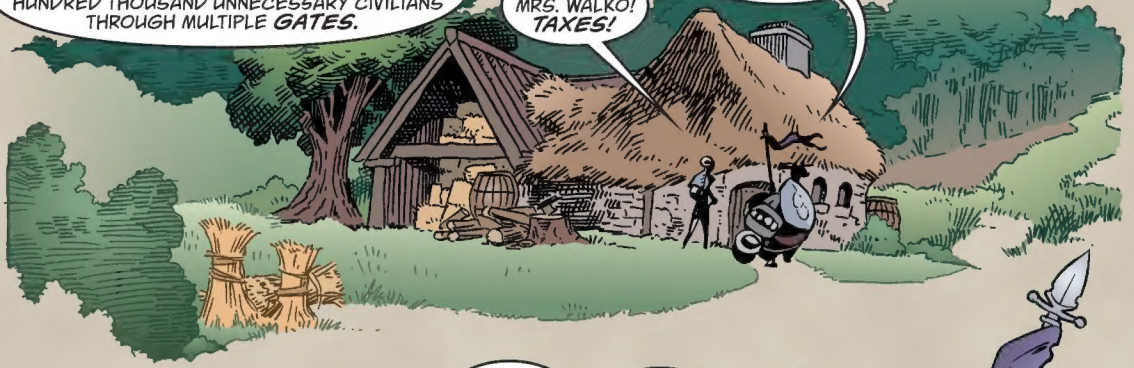
## Chapter One of HOMELANDS

Bill Willingham: writer-creator  
Mark Buckingham: penciller  
Steve Leialoha: inker  
Daniel Vozzo: colors  
Todd Klein: letters  
James Jean: cover art  
Mariah Huehner: assist. editor  
Shelly Bond: editor

THE TWELFTH IS DEPLOYED ON THEIR *OWN* HOMETOWN, SO THE EMPIRE DOESN'T HAVE TO BEAR THE COST OF SHOIVING A HUNDRED THOUSAND UNNECESSARY CIVILIANS THROUGH MULTIPLE *GATES*.

TAXES, MRS. WALKO! TAXES!

COME OUT AND TEND TO YOUR *CIVIC DUTY!*



GOOD MORNING, MRS. WALKO.

AREN'T YOU HERE EARLY THIS MONTH?

NO, SIXTY-THREE PENCE, PLEASE.



IT'S JUST THAT THE CORN CROP DIDN'T COME IN AS *FULL* AS WE'D HOPED.

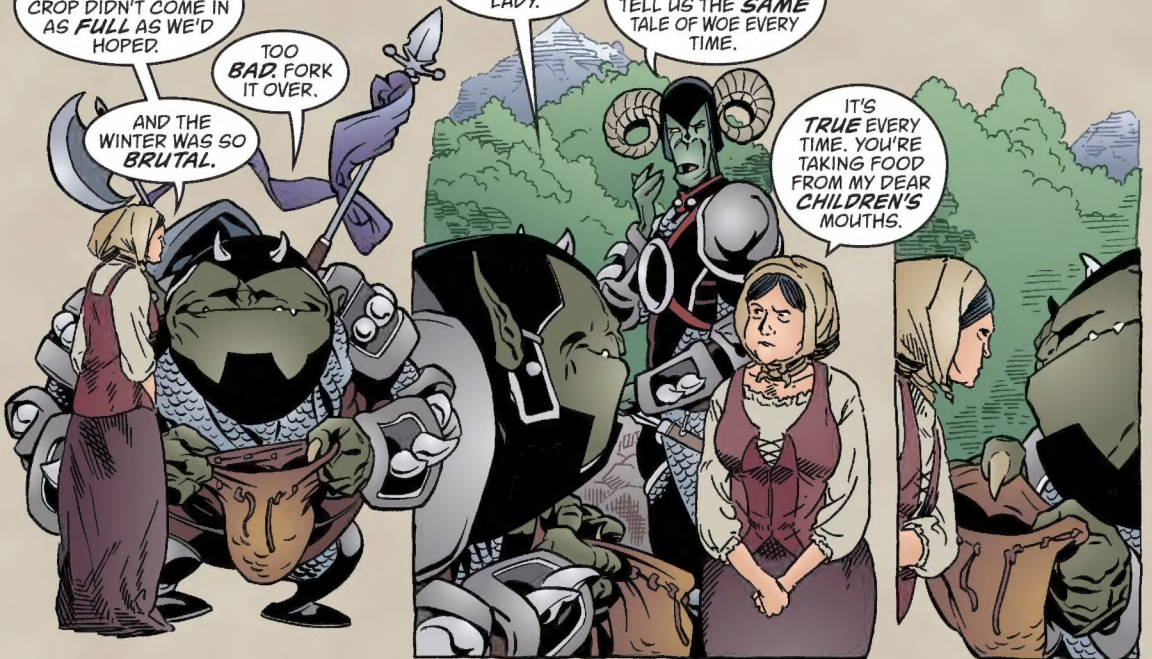
TOO *BAD*, FORK IT OVER.

AND THE WINTER WAS SO *BRUTAL*.

SIXTY-THREE PENCE, LADY.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MRS. WALKO, YOU TELL US THE *SAME* TALE OF WOE EVERY TIME.

IT'S *TRUE* EVERY TIME. YOU'RE TAKING FOOD FROM MY DEAR *CHILDREN'S* MOUTHS.





HERE YOU GO, AND I HOPE YOU **CHOK** ON IT.

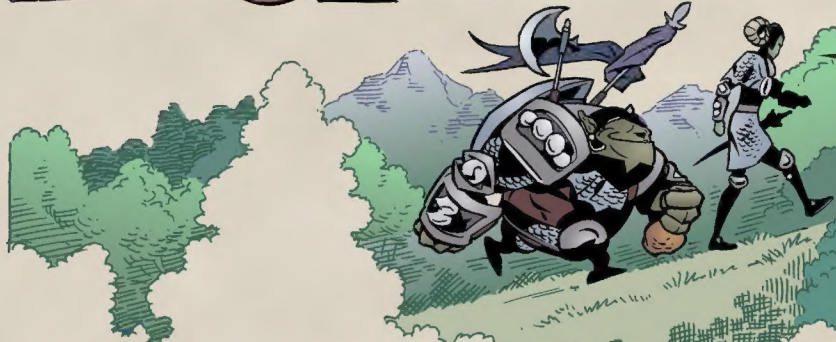
GOODBYE, MRS. WALKO, SEE YOU **NEXT** MONTH.



WHERE WERE WE?



TRANSFER TO THE **TWELFTH**.



RIGHT--SO, DO YOU KNOW WHY UGO RUTHWAGGURD, OVER IN THE **THIRD** SQUAD, IS CALLED **LEFTY** NOW?



I PRESUME IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT HE'S **MISSING** HIS RIGHT HAND.


WHICH HE LOST WHEN SERGEANT LUP CAUGHT HIM USING SAID HAND TO WRITE OUT A **TRANSFER-REQUEST** LETTER.

LEFTY CAN **WRITE**?

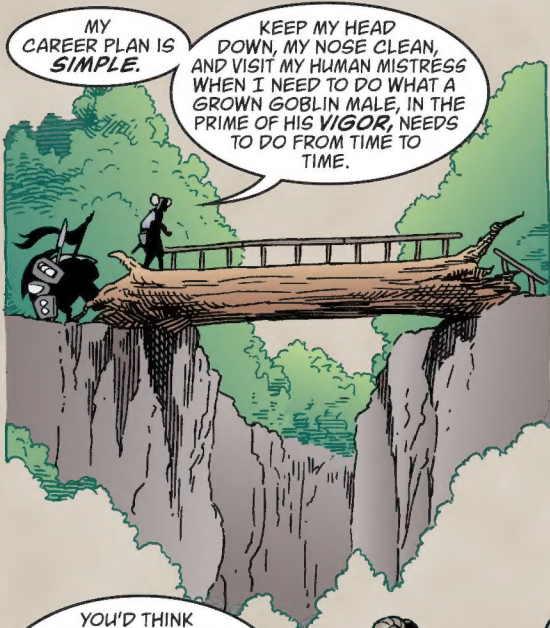
**NOT** SO MUCH ANYMORE.

THE SERGEANT'S OLD SCHOOL. HE DOESN'T LIKE TROOPS WHO THINK THEY SHOULD HAVE SOME SAY IN **WHERE** THEY'RE ASSIGNED.

SO YOU TRY FOR A **TRANSFER**, IF YOU LIKE.



BUT I'LL JUST **MUDDLE** ALONG IN THE **JOLLY** FOURTH HORDE, AVOIDING ANYTHING THAT'S LIKELY TO GET ME **NOTICED** BY SERGEANT RATFUCK, OR ANY OF THE OTHER RATFUCKS IN OUR CHAIN OF **COMMAND**.



MY CAREER PLAN IS SIMPLE.

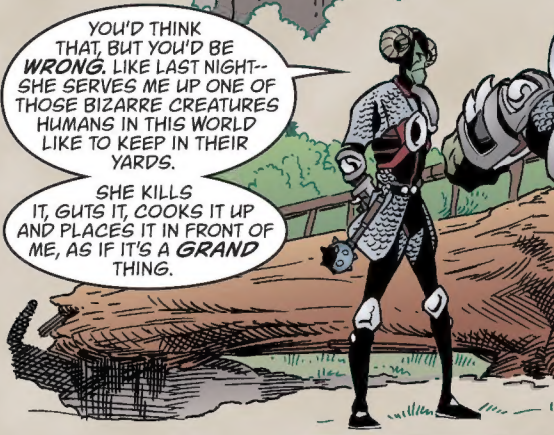
KEEP MY HEAD DOWN, MY NOSE CLEAN, AND VISIT MY HUMAN MISTRESS WHEN I NEED TO DO WHAT A GROWN GOBLIN MALE, IN THE PRIME OF HIS VIGOR, NEEDS TO DO FROM TIME TO TIME.



SO HOW'S SHE WORKING OUT?

NOT TOO BAD, EXCEPT FOR HER COOKING.

HAS TO BE BETTER THAN WHAT WE GET IN THE MESS HALL.



YOU'D THINK THAT, BUT YOU'D BE WRONG. LIKE LAST NIGHT-SHE SERVES ME UP ONE OF THOSE BIZARRE CREATURES HUMANS IN THIS WORLD LIKE TO KEEP IN THEIR YARDS.

SHE KILLS IT, GUTS IT, COOKS IT UP AND PLACES IT IN FRONT OF ME, AS IF IT'S A GRAND THING.



"WHAT'S THIS?" I SAY, AND SHE PROUDLY ANNOUNCES, "IT'S CHICKEN."

"CHICKEN"? SAYS I, DUBIOUSLY, AND SHE SAYS, "DON'T BE A BABY. EAT IT. YOU'LL LIKE IT. TRUST ME. IT TASTES JUST LIKE SNAKE."

SO I TRIED A BITE.

THOUGHT I WAS GONNA DIE.



NO, MR. THROK,  
I DO **NOT** WANT TO SING  
A FEW CAMPFIRE SONGS  
AFTER DINNER.

THANK  
YOU **SO** MUCH  
FOR ASKING,  
THOUGH.




HAHAHAARRRROOOOOOOOO!

A scene showing two characters in armor sitting around a campfire at night. The character on the left is looking towards the right. The character on the right is holding a horn. There is a small fire on a spit over the campfire. Various weapons and items are scattered around them.


DID  
YOU HEAR  
THAT?

RELAX, KILLER.  
IT'S JUST SOME CRITTER,  
HORNY FOR ITS MATE. THESE  
WOODS ARE **FULL** OF ALL  
MANNER OF ODD  
CRITTERS.




NO, IT  
SOUNDED MORE  
LIKE A **HUNTING**  
HORN.

MAYBE SO,  
WHICH ONLY MEANS ONE  
OF OUR **PRIVILEGED** CAPTAINS  
IS OUT **ENJOYING** HIMSELF,  
WHILE **WE** WORK. SAME  
AS ALWAYS.



YOU'RE  
PROBABLY RIGHT,  
BUT--




OH NO, YOU'RE  
GOING TO START TELLING  
**GHOST** STORIES AGAIN,  
AREN'T YOU?

NOT GHOSTS,  
OGREN! THE **BLACK**  
**KNIGHT!**



HERE  
WE GO  
AGAIN.



LAUGH IF YOU  
WANT, BUT I HEARD IT  
**DIRECTLY** FROM CORPORAL  
KROMP. THE **BLACK KNIGHT**  
HUNTS THESE WOODS, KILLING  
INNOCENT TAX COLLECTORS  
AND STEALING THE  
MONEY.

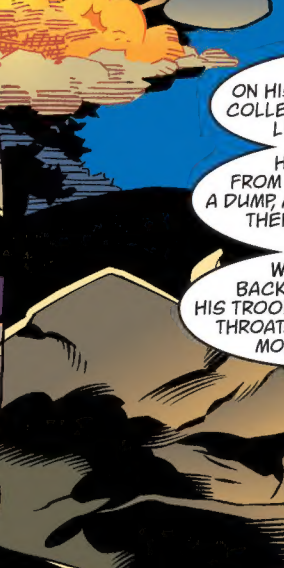


AND EVERY  
TIME, JUST BEFORE  
HE **APPEARS**, HE  
SOUNDS HIS HUNT-  
ING HORN.



AND  
HOW DOES  
KROMP KNOW  
THIS, SEEING AS  
HOW **HIS** THROAT  
IS DECIDEDLY  
**UNCUT?**

IT'S ALWAYS  
THE LAST THING  
YOU HEAR, BEFORE  
HE **CUTS YOUR**  
**THROAT.**



HE WAS OUT  
ON HIS ROUTE LAST MONTH  
COLLECTING **TAXES**, JUST  
LIKE YOU AND ME.

HE GOES AWAY  
FROM THE CAMP TO TAKE  
A DUMP, AND WHILE HE'S **OUT**  
THERE HE HEARS THE  
**HORN.**

WHEN HE GETS  
BACK HE FINDS ALL OF  
HIS TROOPS **DEAD**, WITH THEIR  
THROATS CUT, AND THE TAX  
MONEY **STOLEN.**



LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING ABOUT CORPORAL KROMP. I CAME UP WITH HIM IN THE RANKS.

HE'S A THIEF AND A LIAR-- NOT TO MENTION A FREQUENT ABUSER OF SMALL FARM ANIMALS.

HE KILLED THOSE SOLDIERS HIMSELF, SO HE COULD TAKE THE MONEY.

YOUR SO-CALLED BLACK KNIGHT IS JUST THE COVER STORY HE DREAMED UP TO EXPLAIN IT ALL TO OUR IDIOT OFFICERS.

ONLY A BUNCH OF PONCY, COLLEGE-EDUCATED ARISTO-OFFICERS COULD EVER BELIEVE SUCH NONSENSE.

AND NOW YOU, OF COURSE.

BUT DON'T BLAME YOURSELF. YOUR MAMA DID SAY THEY DROPPED YOU A LOT AS A BABY.

BUT WHAT IF IT'S TRUE?



YES, MY DEAR OGREN, WHAT IF IT IS?

WHO IN SULFURS BELOW ARE YOU?



I SUSPECT I MUST BE THE VERY BOGEYMAN OF MR. THROK'S CURRENT ANXIETIES.

A TAX COLLECTOR ON TAX COLLECTORS, AND A FREQUENT CHOPPER OF RIPE GREEN HEADS.

I HAVE THE DUBIOUS PLEASURE OF BEING YOUR **BLACK KNIGHT**.

WHY NOT?

YOU CAN'T BE!

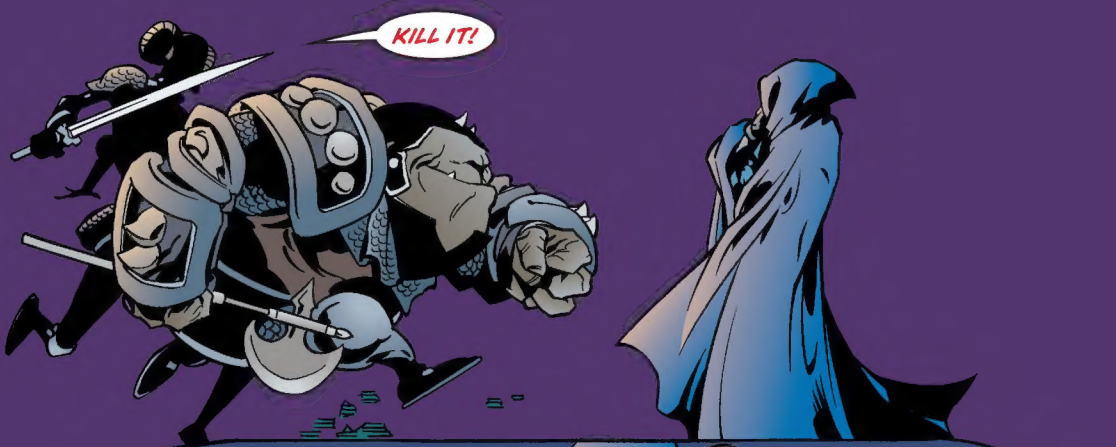
WELL, FOR **ONE** THING, YOU'RE NOT WEARING **BLACK**.

TRUE, BUT I DIDN'T **COIN** THE APPELLATION.

AND SWITCHING TO **BLUE KNIGHT** WOULDN'T WORK, BECAUSE, WHERE I COME FROM, THAT'S A COGNOMEN FOR CONSTABLES OF THE LAW.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND **HALF** OF WHAT HE'S SAYING. DO YOU UNDERSTAND **HALF** OF WHAT HE'S SAYING?

WHO CARES? IT'S JUST A **HUMAN BOY!**



KILL IT!



EASIER SAID, HUH, BOYS?



IT'S TRULY AN AMAZING GARMENT.

IT AFFORDS PROTECTION MORE ADAMANT THAN A SUIT OF QUARTER-INCH PLATE.


ANOTHER QUALITY?

IT MAGICALLY HOLDS SO MANY INTERESTING THINGS.

WOODEN BOYS AND DEADLIER TOYS.

SUCH AS THE JABBERWOCK'S BANE.

SNICKER-SNACK!



NOW YOU'RE UNARMED, AND WITHIN A CAT'S WHISKER OF BEING UNHEADED.

UNLESS WE CAN HAVE A *MUTUALLY* PRODUCTIVE MEETING OF THE MINDS.

WHEN WE'RE DONE, I'D LIKE YOU TO RETRACE YOUR ROUTE AND GIVE THAT MONEY *BACK*.

BEFORE THAT YOU'RE GOING TO COUGH UP SOME INFORMATION.


LOCATION OF GATES JOINING THIS TO THE OTHER WORLDS OF THE EMPIRE.

TROOP STRENGTHS AND DEPLOYMENTS.

DIRECTIONS TO THE PALACE OF THE DISTRICT GOVERNOR.

AMONG *OTHER* THINGS.

I DON'T THINK SO.



I THINK WE'LL *CHOP* YOU, INSTEAD!

DARN IT ALL.



OH WELL. BACK TO SQUARE ONE. FORTUNATELY THERE'RE PLENTY OF OTHER GOBS IN THESE WOODS.

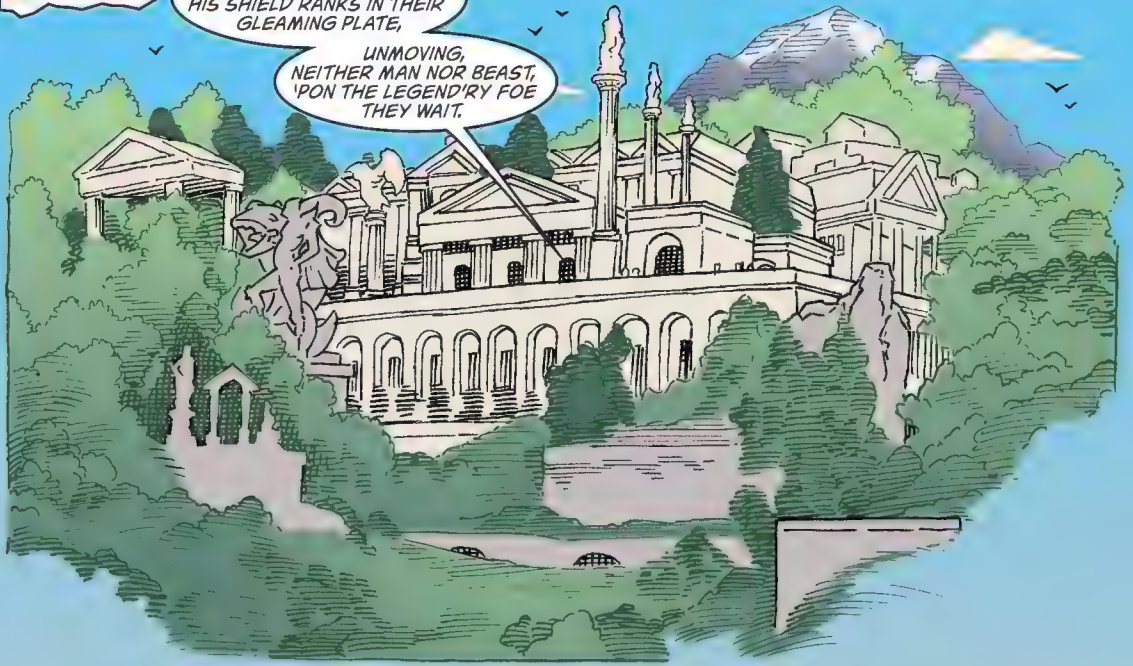
SNICKER-SNACK!



**D**AYS GO BY.

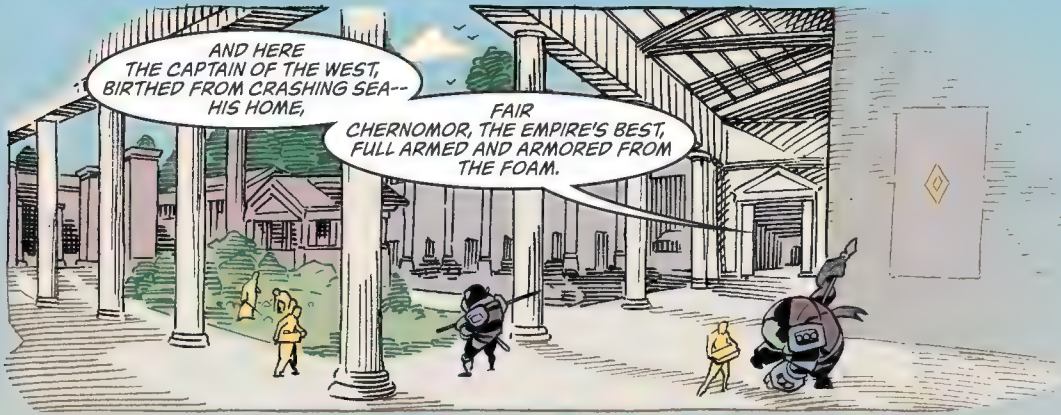
AND THERE THE  
COMMANDER OF THE EAST,  
HIS SHIELD RANKS IN THEIR  
GLEAMING PLATE,

UNMOVING,  
NEITHER MAN NOR BEAST,  
'PON THE LEGEND'RY FOE  
THEY WAIT.



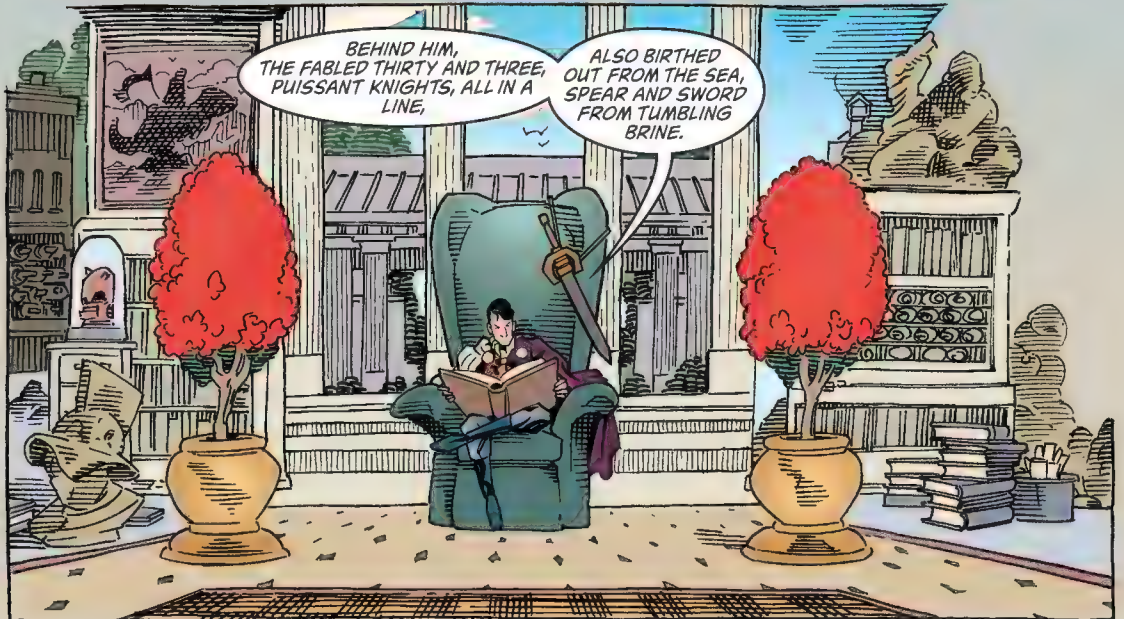
AND HERE  
THE CAPTAIN OF THE WEST,  
BIRTHED FROM CRASHING SEA--  
HIS HOME,

FAIR  
CHERNOMOR, THE EMPIRE'S BEST,  
FULL ARMED AND ARMORED FROM  
THE FOAM.



BEHIND HIM,  
THE FABLED THIRTY AND THREE,  
PUISSANT KNIGHTS, ALL IN A  
LINE,

ALSO BIRTHED  
OUT FROM THE SEA,  
SPEAR AND SWORD  
FROM TUMBLING  
BRINE.



WILD  
THE SCREAMS  
AND BOLD CRIES,  
TWIN'D THE  
ARMIES MEET  
AS ONE,

THE  
FALTERING  
SHIELD LINE  
HOLDS, THEN DIES,  
THE ARMY OF  
THE EAST IS  
DONE.

THE  
EASTERN  
CAPTAIN  
TURNS TO FLEE,  
THE TRITONIC  
KNIGHTS GIVE  
CHASE,

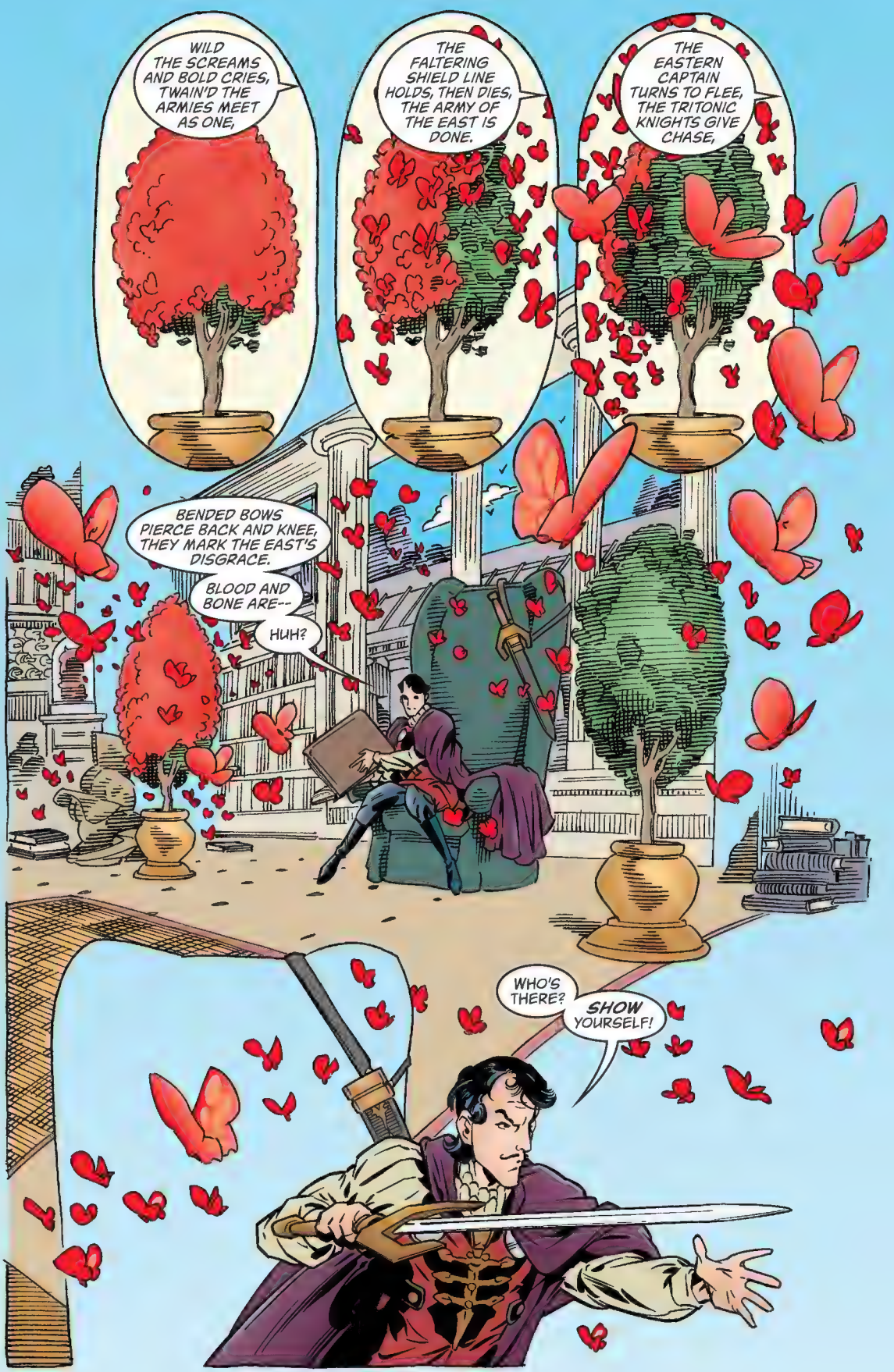
BENDED BOWS  
PIERCE BACK AND KNEE,  
THEY MARK THE EAST'S  
DISGRACE.

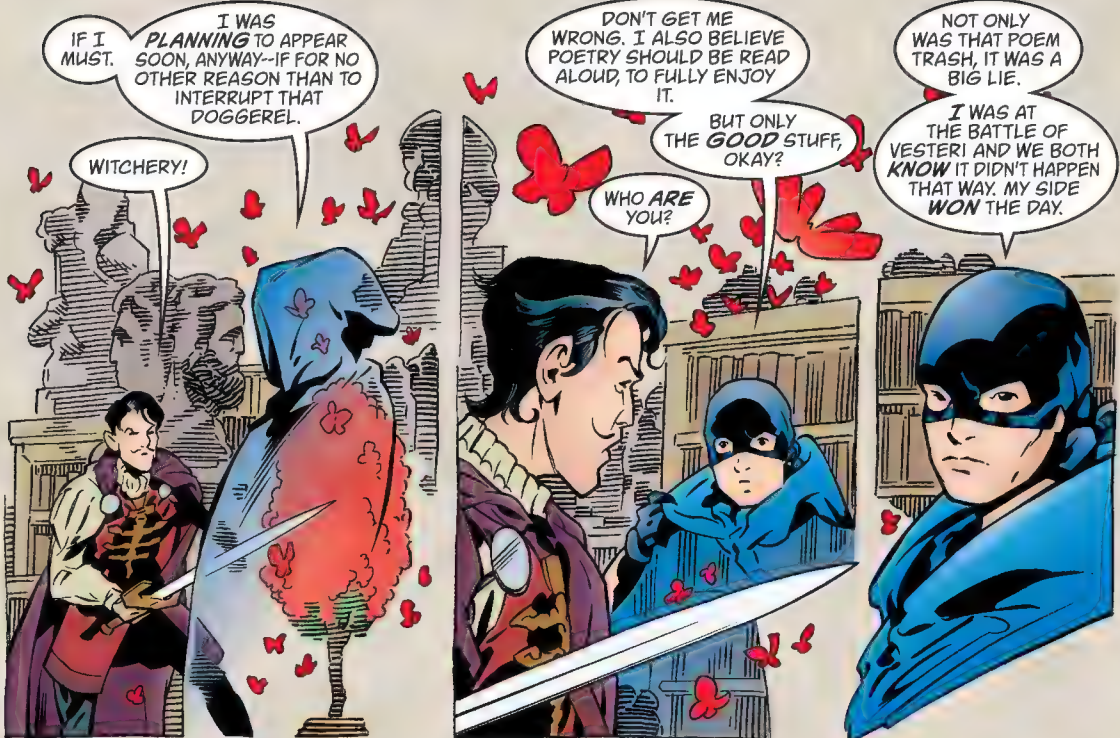
BLOOD AND  
BONE ARE--

HUH?

WHO'S  
THERE?

SHOW  
YOURSELF!





IF I MUST. I WAS **PLANNING** TO APPEAR SOON, ANYWAY--IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN TO INTERRUPT THAT **DOGGEREL**.

WITCHERY!

DON'T GET ME WRONG. I ALSO BELIEVE POETRY SHOULD BE READ ALOUD, TO FULLY ENJOY IT.

BUT ONLY THE **GOOD STUFF**, OKAY?

WHO ARE YOU?

NOT ONLY WAS THAT POEM TRASH, IT WAS A BIG LIE.

I WAS AT THE BATTLE OF VESTERI! AND WE BOTH **KNOW** IT DIDN'T HAPPEN THAT WAY. MY SIDE **WON** THE DAY.



IS THAT HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME NOW, CAPTAIN CHERNOMOR? COMMISSIONING BAD RHYMES ABOUT YOUR OWN **FABRICATED** EXPLOITS?

I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOU, BOY, BUT I'M **GOVERNOR** NOW.

SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE EMPIRE'S FOURTH HOST, AND SUZERAIN OVER **MORE** THAN HALF OF THIS WORLD.

AND YET YOU GET YOUR **JOLLIES** SITTING ALONE REREADING YOUR OLD PRESS CLIPPINGS TO YOURSELF?

HOW **PATHETIC** IS THAT?



TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT, INTRUDER--QUICKLY, SO I CAN RUN YOU THROUGH AND BE BACK ABOUT MY BUSINESS.

HOWEVER, IT'S NOT SO MUCH YOU, BUT ACCESS TO YOUR LIBRARY I REALLY WANT.

OFFICIAL MAPS, CHARTS AND RECORDS-- AND IMPERIAL HISTORIES LESS FANCIFUL THAN THE ONES YOU ENJOY.

WELL, FIRST I WANT TO TELL YOU THAT YOU STILL HAVE A FEW GOBS LEFT IN YOUR ARMY.

YOU'LL BE PLEASED TO KNOW MOST WERE SURPRISINGLY LOYAL. I HAD TO KILL A HOST OF THEM BEFORE ONE FINALLY DIRECTED ME TO YOU.

BUT I NEED TIME UNDISTURBED TO MEANDER THROUGH IT ALL, WHICH MEANS, I'M AFRAID, YOU'LL HAVE TO GO, SO I CAN REPLACE YOU.

YOU DARE TO COPY ME?

THAT'S AN UNLAWFUL USE OF SORCERY!

SUE ME.

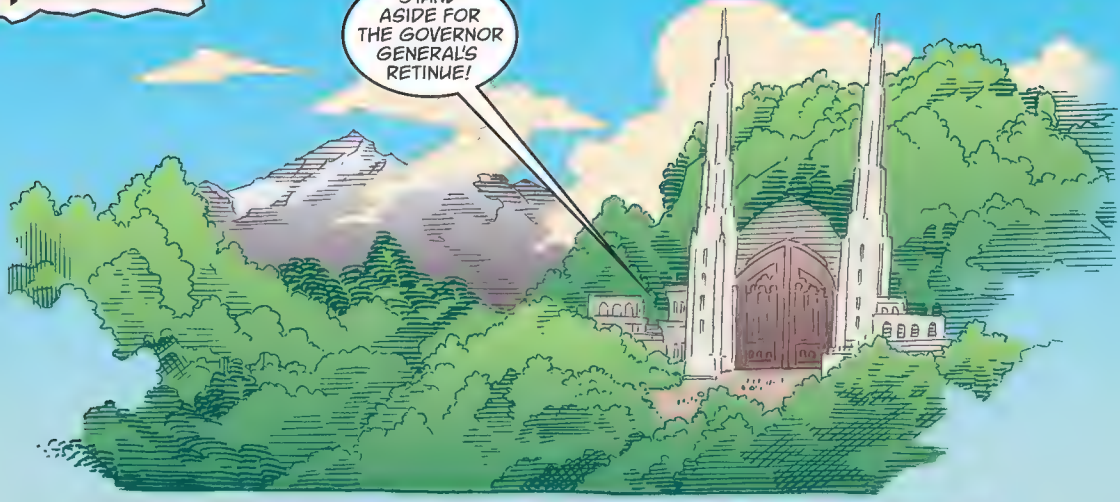
=:URRRRGHHH!:

SNICKER-SNACK!

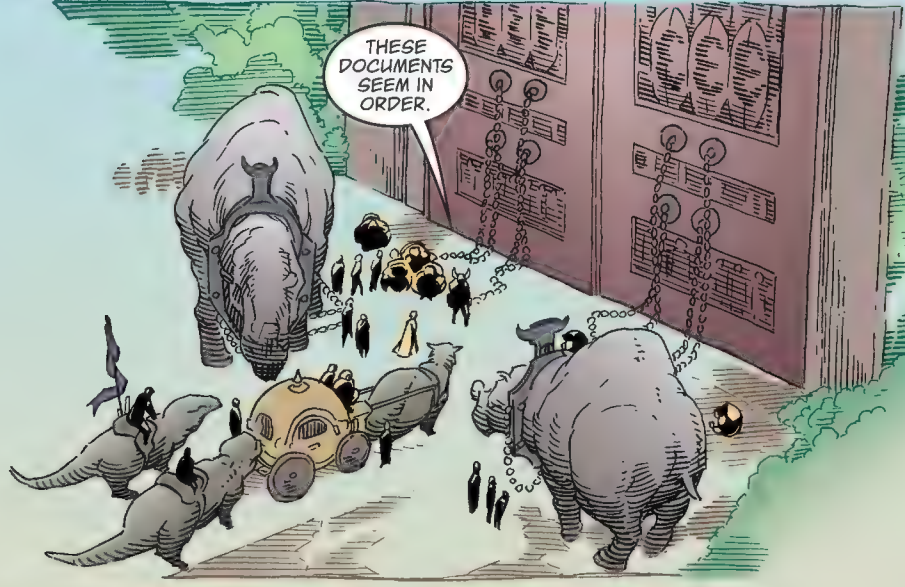


TWO WEEKS LATER.

STAND ASIDE FOR THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S RETINUE!



THESE DOCUMENTS SEEM IN ORDER.



THEN OPEN THE PASSAGE AND I'LL BE ON MY WAY. THE EMPEROR HAS SUMMONED ME.

BUT THIS GATE ISN'T THE MOST DIRECT ROUTE TO THE IMPERIAL THRONE WORLD.

SOMETIMES INDIRECT ROUTES ARE REQUIRED.

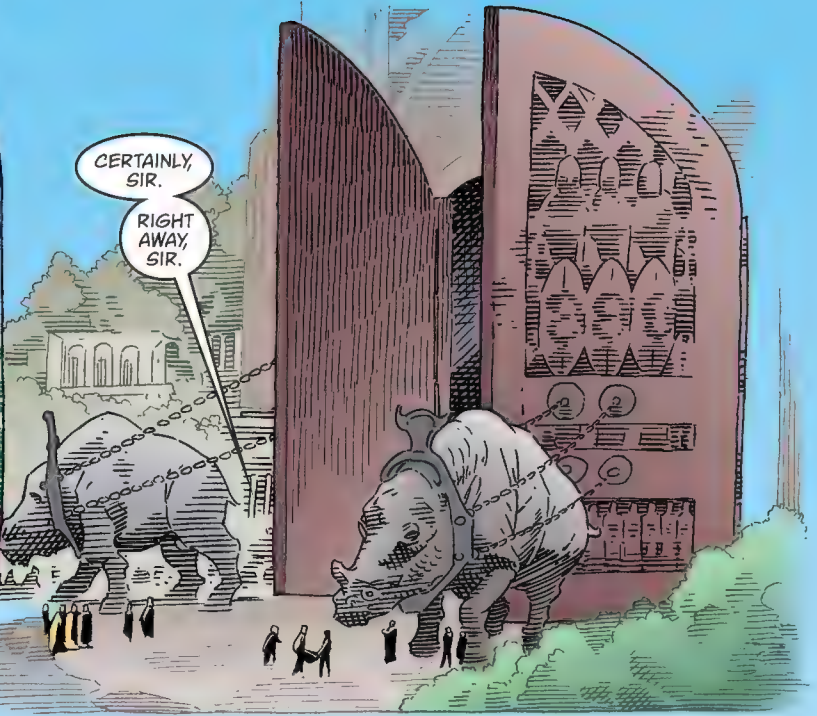
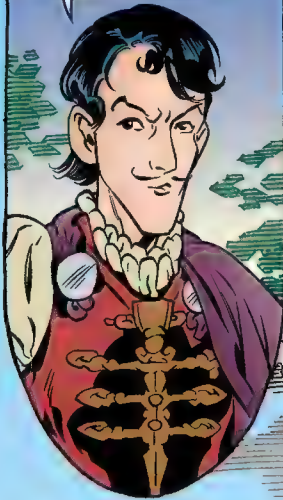


IN ANY CASE, CAPTAIN, IT'S NOT YOUR PLACE TO QUESTION THE COMINGS AND GOINGS OF YOUR SUPERIORS.

NOW GET THOSE DOORS OPEN BEFORE IT BECOMES SOMEONE ELSE'S DUTY--IF YOU GET MY MEANING.

CERTAINLY, SIR.

RIGHT AWAY, SIR.



I'LL BE GOING ON ALONE FROM HERE, FIRST MINISTER KAMARAND. RETURN TO HEAD-QUARTERS AND AWAIT FURTHER ORDERS.

BUT, SIR! THE ROAD FROM HERE IS TOO DANGEROUS!



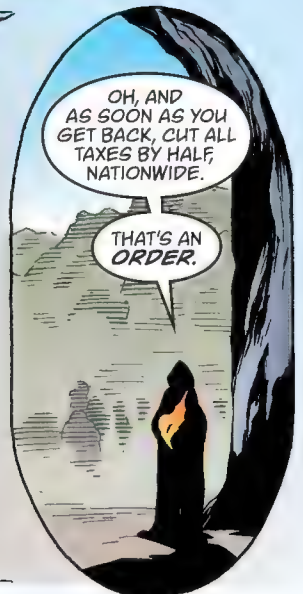
NEVERTHELESS...

THIS IS UNPRECEDENTED!

OBEY ME. GO HOME. RUN THINGS IN MY ABSENCE.

OH, AND AS SOON AS YOU GET BACK, CUT ALL TAXES BY HALF, NATIONWIDE.

THAT'S AN ORDER.





DAMN.



I WASN'T THINKING.

I SHOULD'VE ALSO MADE HIM ORDER EVERY SOLDIER IN THE FOURTH HORDE TO LEARN TO SING AND TAP-DANCE-- AND THAT *PINK* WAS OUR NEW UNIT COLOR.



WELL, THIS ISN'T A VERY *NICE* PLACE, IS IT?



STILL, I  
WANTED A BACK-DOOR  
ROUTE TO THE EMPEROR,  
AND THIS SEEMS TO FIT  
THE BILL.

IT'S  
CERTAIN **NO**  
**ONE'S** VISITED  
THIS SORRY LAND  
IN A VERY LONG  
TIME.

TIME  
TO BE ON YOUR  
WAY, BOY BLUE, BEFORE  
YOU BEGIN **TALKING**  
TO YOURSELF.

THIS  
SEEMS THE  
**BEST** WAY TO PUT  
MILES BETWEEN ME  
AND THIS TERRIBLE  
LAND.

LONG HOURS TURN INTO DAYS.

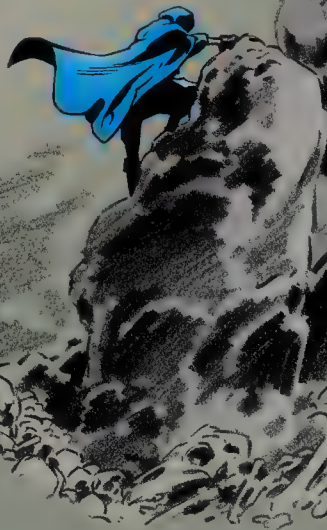


AND DAYS BECOME WEEKS.



I THINK THIS IS THE PLACE.

TOO BAD FOR ME.

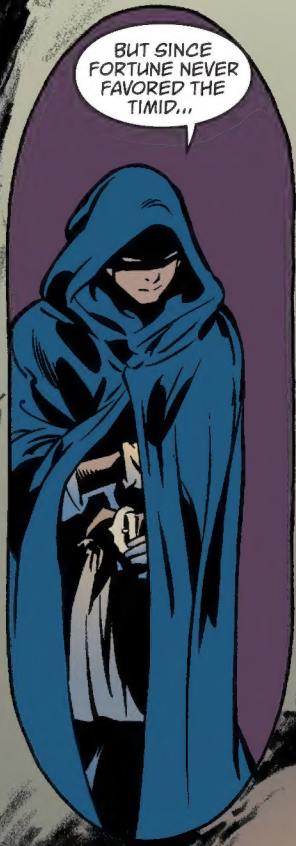


NOT VERY INVITING.

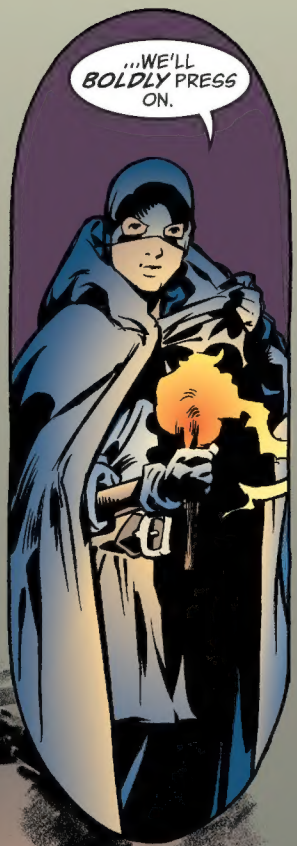
I'M NOT LIKING THE LOOK OF THIS.



NOT ONE BIT.



BUT SINCE FORTUNE NEVER FAVORED THE TIMID,...



...WE'LL BOLDLY PRESS ON.



GOOD THING I DECIDED TO SAVE THE TORCH.



AH, IS THAT A LIGHT AHEAD?



HMMMMMM?  
WHAT  
COULD THIS  
BE?  
HAS  
A RARE  
GUEST COME  
CALLING?

YEAH, BUT  
I'M JUST PASSING  
THROUGH.

AND TO  
TELL YOU THE  
TRUTH, I WAS  
REALLY SORT OF  
HOPING YOU'D  
BE LONG  
**DEAD**  
BY  
NOW.

Next: The  
Saint George  
Syndrome

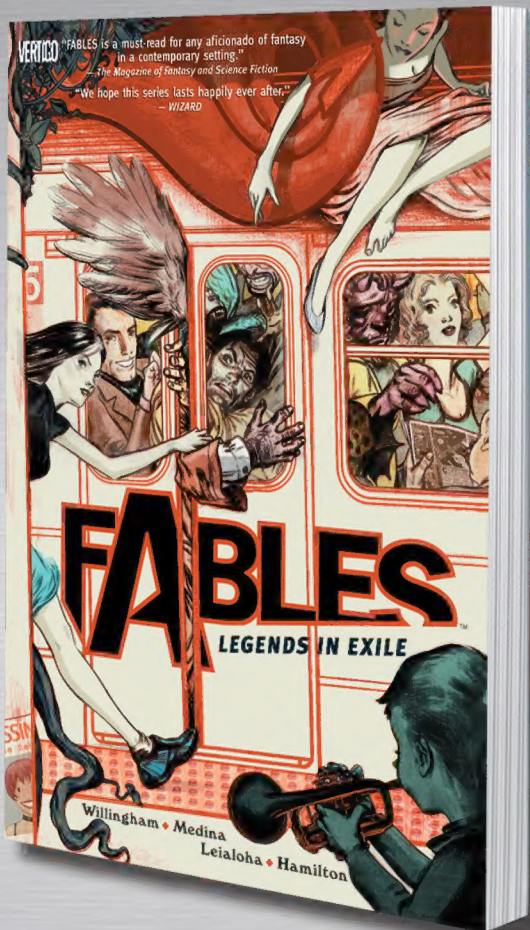
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# BILL WILLINGHAM

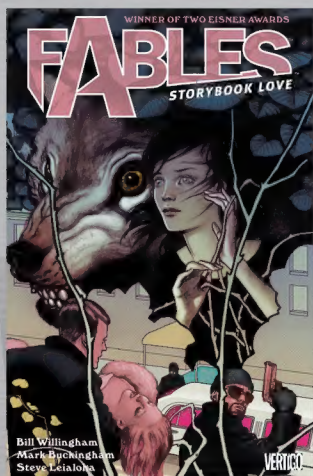
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- VOL. 2: ANIMAL FARM**
- VOL. 3: STORYBOOK LOVE**
- VOL. 4: MARCH OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS**
- VOL. 5: THE MEAN SEASONS**
- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS**
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)**
- VOL. 8: WOLVES**
- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE**
- VOL. 10: THE GOOD PRINCE**
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- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER**
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL**



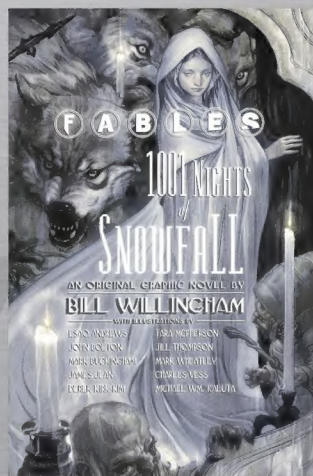
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NATHAN